

Town of Bloomfield
Economic Development Commission Meeting
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #5
DRAFT MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2016

Present: Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Harold Harper, Michelle Bononi and Jerry Katrichis

Also present: Director of Planning and Economic Development, José Giner, Mayor Joan Gamble, Deputy Mayor Syd Schulman, Councilman Joe Washington, Don Poland, Rob Rowson, Dave Driver, Dale Bertoldi, and Laura James, Recording Secretary

1. Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m.

2. Minutes

Ms. Bercowetz made a motion to accept the minutes of December 8, 2015 with corrections, Jerry Katrichis seconded the motion, and motion was approved unanimously.

3. Update Wintonbury Mall

Mr. Rowson stated the Wintonbury Mall lost a couple tenants. Mr. Rowson had a meeting scheduled with leasing agent but was abruptly canceled. Mr. Giner stated the only contact he had was with Shawn Bidsal, Principal Owner regarding the possibility of the library going in as an anchor.

4. Filley Park Update

Mr. Giner stated they are waiting for spring for finishing touches. The Town Council formed a Committee to fund Phase 2 and Phase 3. Receiving good responses from citizens.

5. Staff and Commission Updates

a. Niagara Bottling

Mr. Giner stated there was a meeting last night at the Town Council Meeting with the public. The Hartford Courant and Fox 61 was also present. Some citizens were objecting to the use of plastic bottles because of some environmental concerns. Some citizens thought these type of applications should have been vetted by the CEEC. Mr. Giner stated that all approvals granted by Wetlands and TPZ went through the proper channels and was on the agenda of the Inland Wetlands.

Mayor Gamble stated that the objection from some of the citizens was regarding water usage. The citizens stated that it takes 4 liters to make a single bottle of water but according to Niagara Bottling it is actually 1.4 liters. The concerned citizens couldn't see any benefit of Niagara Bottling coming to the Town of Bloomfield.

Deputy Mayor Schulman stated that if Niagara Bottling felt there was enough of public outcry, Niagara might back out of the deal.

Ms. Bercowetz stated there is nothing illegal about the use of plastic bottles.

Mr. Giner stated that he met with Ed Lally and Niagara Bottling is expected to close on the property soon. He stated that Niagara Bottling has signed the tax agreement and wants to be open by November.

Deputy Mayor Schulman stated that the citizens may want an environment study if someone wanted to fund that.

Mr. Giner was asked if there is any recourse for citizens to appeal or sue the MDC. Rob Rowson replied probably not, MDC has developed a system for this region. Mr. Rowson stated procedurally the Town of Bloomfield has done everything it is supposed to do. Mr. Rowson stated Niagara Bottling is a great clean production, and a huge public relations plus for Bloomfield.

Mr. Driver stated these are global issues as opposed to local issues. Mayor Gamble stated one of the questions she was asked was can the deal be delayed for two weeks and invite Niagara Bottling back to be questioned. She asked the same question of Attorney Marc Needleman who told her that by taking action after too much time the Town is opening themselves up for a lawsuit from Niagara Bottling.

Deputy Mayor Schulman stated the Town Council cannot say we are going to delay this agreement. Councilman Washington stated Niagara Bottling has to be dealt with through the normal course of business and if it is delayed further the Town may be sued.

Mr. Katrichis asked if there is some advantage as to having an external monitor of water quality in the region. Should we just take MDC's word as to water quality?

Ms. Bononi stated when living in Michigan she was present for the Nestle bottled water group suit against the State of Michigan in which the State of Michigan resoundingly lost. Nestle was looking to use the Aquifer and the State put forth the defense as to how local water quality would be adversely affected. Ms. Bononi asked Chairman Long if the Economic Development Committee should take a position on this matter.

Ms. Bononi made a motion that the Economic Development Committee should have a position on the matter of Niagara Bottling. Motion was seconded by Ms. Bercowetz and was approved unanimously.

Chairman Long stated the Economic Development Committee should make a statement to Niagara in support. The Economic Development Committee further discussed the language that should be used and submit this letter to the Town Council and Niagara Bottling upon approval by the Economic Development Committee.

Ms. Bononi stated the Economic Development Committee should be on the Town of Bloomfield's calendar. Mr. Giner stated the EDC should be on the calendar and will check as to why it is not.

Councilman Washington asked Mr. Giner when he plans on disseminating the letter. Mr. Giner stated he can draft and send possibly today. EDC asked to have by the end of the week.

Ms. Bononi made a motion the Jose' Giner move forward with refining the language of the response as he has read today and circulate to EDC and consultants for comment or changes and upon majority approval that the letter be submitted to Chairman Long by end of the week. Seconded by Ms. Bercowetz and was approved unanimously.

Chairman Long stated he thought the letter should go to Town Council but it should also go to Steve Goode, Hartford Courant as well.

Ms. Bercowetz stated the EDC should hold off going to the Hartford Courant until there is a response. Ms. Bononi stated the decision should be left to the Town Council's discretion whether to send to press. Councilman Washington stated if it is Chairman Long's position, then the letter should be sent Town wide from EDC. Ms. Bononi stated she thinks it should go to the Town Council. Mr. Driver stated the EDC should issue a press release to the Town Manager that says the EDC endorses this project and send that press release to Niagara Bottling. Mr. Rowson stated it is critical to get the letter to Niagara Bottling and not the Press. The final consensus was that the letter should be addressed to Niagara Bottling expressing continued support of the project.

b. Town Center Apartments

Mr. Giner stated that the Town Plan and Zoning Commission gave its final approval to the 215 unit project. He reported there would be a two-year construction time frame. He expects them to come in anytime for demolition permits.

c. Goman & York

Mr. Rowlson presented the Bloomfield Merchants logo to the EDC that was revealed at their first annual holiday celebration held at Isaac's Bagel shop. The logo was released along with a promotional Brochure of the shops. The Hartford Courant and Bloomfield Journal were present at the gathering. Mr. Rowlson reported that the next meeting is January 25th at 8:30 a.m. at Carbone's.

Mr. Rowlson stated they have researched billboard signage and the cost for one week is \$3500 to \$6500 for a full week period with a fixed stationary message and it is the same price for electronic bill boards or Jr. Posters as it is called. For every four weeks the Town will get an additional four weeks at no charge because the Town of Bloomfield is a non-profit. Three things would have to be done: #1. Budget; #2 a message, and the company has creative people to help; and #3 Timing, when to go up and come down.

Mr. Rowlson stated April, May and June would be a good time. Mr. Rowlson asked if the EDC would like to go forward with a budget being put together to present to Town Manager. Ms. Bercowetz stated layering of advertising of any type is a positive. Mr. Rowlson stated the message can be changed during the four-week period.

Ms. Bononi asked what the billboard would be directing people to come here to Bloomfield to do or be impressed by. They last thing the EDC wants to do is to bring people here and the people say why am I here. Mr. Poland stated we are not trying to make people physically come here, the idea of billboard is to raise awareness that the Town of Bloomfield is open for business.

Ms. Bononi asked who the customer is. Mr. Rowlson stated the big message is Bloomfield and celebrating Bloomfield. Ms. Bononi stated she thinks the EDC we should have a focus group.

Mr. Poland presented a power point presentation about the state of Lower Blue Hills Avenue and blight in the neighborhood. Mr. Poland stated that blight is a symptom and not a cause. The Town has to study the neighborhood, to see what is going on in the neighborhood, and why it is struggling. Blighted conditions come into existence and when these homeowners are forced to comply with the zoning enforcement the homeowner puts in the bare minimums. The Town has to address the cause which maybe socioeconomic. The Town has to find out why people are not investing and figure out a way to assist the homeowner in addressing the problems. Moving a neighborhood from blight to caring you have to engage the community. The EDC has to think about what it is the Town wants to do with Lower Blue Hills Avenue. Mr. Don Poland stated the EDC will bring this back up at another time for discussion. Mr. Poland passed out handouts of his presentation and stated that he would provide a digital copy to Mr. Giner.

Mr. Giner stated that there will be a meeting regarding trails and activities and invited everyone to attend. He also mentioned there would be a January 28th meeting of the TPZ to discuss parking. He also stated that there is a suggestion that the town implement an "Adopt a Spot" program through the Beautification Committee that will take care of the landscaping of certain targeted spots around Town, with a sign identifying the entity responsible for maintenance of the spot. Home Depot was looking to do something.

Next Economic Development Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 16, 2015.

6. Adjournment

Michelle Bononi made a motion to adjourn at 10:00 a.m. Motion was seconded by Jerry Katrichis and approved unanimously.